

TO ALL COUNTY ELECTION OFFICIALS and the OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION:

Please be advised, due to the *Governor's Directive implementing Executive Orders 2-2020 and 3-2020* and providing for measures to implement the 2020 June primary safely which was released today, (attached) 3/25/2020, the deadline for the Secretary of State to receive written plans for 2020 Special Purpose District mail ballot elections to be held on **May 5th, 2020**, has been extended to **5pm, on April 1st, 2020**.

We are in the process of updating the 2020 Special Purpose District Calendar on the website to reflect the new deadline and have attached an updated copy to this email.

As a reminder, the Secretary of State's office has a statutory requirement of 5 days to review and approve any new mail ballot plans and all other statutory requirements for amendments or changes to existing approved plans will also be extended to **5pm, on April 1st, 2020**.

Please NOTE: Submit all mail ballot plans to the SOS Elections Help desk at: SOSElectionsHelp@service.mt.gov

Specific information on the Governor's Directive regarding the **2020 Federal Primary Election** will be sent in a separate email.

Thank you, please let us know if you have any questions
Regards,



Lisa Schlosser | Elections Specialist
Secretary of State's Office, Corey Stapleton
State Capitol Building, 1301 E. 6th Avenue
Helena, MT 59601
PHONE 406.444.7911
website | **email** | **map**

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

Steve Bullock
GOVERNOR



Mike Cooney
LT. GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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CONTACTS:

Marissa Perry, Communications Director, Governor's Office, (406) 444-4514

Erin Loranger, Press Secretary, Governor's Office, (406) 444-9725

**Governor Bullock to Allow Counties the Choice to Conduct All Mail Election
and Expand Early Voting for June Primary**

*All counties required to implement measures to ensure social distancing during voter
registration and voting*

MONTANA – Governor Steve Bullock today issued a Directive to ensure all eligible Montanans can safely vote in the 2020 June primary by allowing counties to expand voting by mail and early voting. All counties will be required to implement social distancing measures for election procedures.

“This is about protecting Montanans’ right to vote at a time we face unprecedented challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic,” Governor Bullock said. **“Locally elected officials best understand the voting needs of their communities, and taking this action now ensures they will have the time to make the right decisions for their localities. I feel confident we can protect both the public’s health and the right to vote with this direction.”**

“I am in full support of Governor Bullock’s Directive of providing counties the option to conduct our June 2nd primary by mail,” said Speaker Greg Hertz. **“This Directive allows counties to choose what is best for their voters and election staff during this state of emergency.”**

Governor Bullock consulted with county election administrators, public health experts, emergency management professionals, the Secretary of State, and political leaders from both parties to determine the safest way to proceed with school elections and the June primary while protecting the rights of Montanans to vote safely.

The Governor’s decision comes as deadlines for election administrators are rapidly approaching. Though voting will not end until June 2, statutory deadlines and other requirements involved in preparing for the election require actions by counties as early as next week.

As cases of COVID-19 continue to grow across the United States and in Montana, the CDC has encouraged states to use voting methods that limit direct contact. Additionally, other jurisdictions have identified traditional election procedures as posing an enhanced risk to public health and human safety. The same factors are present in Montana's typical election procedures, and by acting now, Montana can make appropriate adjustments to hold a fair and accessible June primary election while minimizing community transmission of COVID-19.

Governor Bullock's Directive contains three central components:

- (1) Providing school districts with additional time to choose to conduct mail ballot elections
- (2) Allowing counties the choice to conduct mail ballot elections and expand early voting for the June 2, 2020 primary election
- (3) Requiring counties to establish, implement, and enforce social distancing policies at polling locations, designated drop-off locations, or other public-facing portions of facilities involved in voting.

The Directive provides that even when a county decides to adopt a mail ballot for the June primary election, Montanans are still permitted to vote in person during the thirty-day voting window—even if they have received a mail ballot.

If counties opt in to mail voting for the June primary, they must promptly submit plans to do so. Mail ballots would be released on May 8 and early voting would be available in person through the close of the primary election on June 2.

Additionally, voters will not be required to pay postage to return their ballots by mail.

The Directive also requires additional measures by counties, regardless of their voting procedures, to implement social distancing guidelines to make voter registration and voting safer for all Montanans and reduce spreading COVID-19 within communities. Counties are responsible for ensuring a minimum of six feet of distancing between individuals at polling locations, designated drop-off locations, or public-facing portions of facilities involved in voting. The Directive also extends the close of regular voter registration until 10 days before the election to minimize the need for in-person registration or lines.

The full Directive is attached.

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